

# ARE YOU A HOMEOWNER?

## BED BUGS



### What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are flat, brown, wingless bugs that live where people sleep. Their presence has grown in numbers in the last several years, as they have become more resistant to pesticides formally used to control them.

They do **NOT** carry disease and are **NOT** a sign of “being dirty”. Although they are approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch and can be seen by the eye, they hide very well during the day and can go un-noticed. They hide in mattress and sofa seams, behind light switches and outlet plates, backpacks, clothes, in boxes, any crack or crevice, behind the wallpaper, and anywhere dark. Like mosquitoes, they feed on blood. Bed bugs can live up to one year without a meal and come out to feed only when people are sleeping.



Actual  
Size

If you suspect you have bedbugs, **DO NOT PANIC**. They can be removed if you follow an organized and structured pest management plan. Chemical treatments alone will **NOT** solve the problem. Throwing away your furniture will **NOT** solve the problem. As a matter of fact, throwing out infested furniture only helps spread the bugs to others who may pick up the discarded furniture.

### How do I know if I have bed bugs?

The first thing you need to do is determine if you have bed bugs. The first sign of bed bugs are the bites. Since not every person has a reaction to a bite, one person sleeping next to another may not show signs of any bite at all. Look for red spots on exposed skin while you sleep such as arms, legs, hands and neck. Look for red spots on your sheets. During the night, look for moving bugs on your bedding. Look for dark stains in the seams of your mattress, box spring and under furniture. **Only a Licensed Exterminator or Health Inspector can confirm an infestation.**



On a  
mattress



On your Skin



Under Furniture

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## What do I do?

First understand that a bed bug infestation begins with ONE insect traveling into a building. It is not your fault. The first step is to determine if you have bed bugs. Although you are not required by law to call an exterminator we **RECOMMEND** you do. Working with a Licensed Exterminator can guarantee control of a bed bug infestation. Remember **DO NOT PANIC!** After it is confirmed you have bed bugs, you and a professional exterminator need to work **together** on an organized and structured pest management plan. The exterminator will give you instructions for preparation before a treatment. Without your cooperation and prior preparation, the bugs will **NOT** go away.

### Some tasks you will need to do include but are not limited to:

- ❑ **Vacuum EVERYWHERE** thoroughly with a strong suction vacuum, including all mattresses, box springs, furniture, and walls (including crevices, cracks and behind pictures).
- ❑ **IMMEDIATELY** place vacuum bag in a plastic bag, **SEAL IT**, and place in a trash container **OUTSIDE** the building.
- ❑ Seal mattresses, box springs and pillows in zippered vinyl coverings. Leave sealed for one year. (If there are bugs there, they will have nothing to feed on, will not be able to get out, and will eventually die.)
- ❑ Collect all clothing and washable fabric items from all rooms. **Wash in HOT** soapy water. **Dry on HOT** heat and **IMMEDIATELY** place in plastic sealed containers where they need to remain until the exterminator has finished treatment.
- ❑ Understand that your worn clothes and blankets will smell like you, a blood meal to a bed bug, and is a favorite place for them to hide.
- ❑ If you need to take something out of the sealed container, such as your clothes, repeat washing and drying instructions above, and return to sealed plastic container until the exterminator has finished treatment.
- ❑ Reduce clutter! Inspect each item thoroughly to be sure bugs are not present. Store items you do not use often in a sealed plastic bag or container until the exterminator has finished treatment.

## Who can I call if I need Help?

**Only a Licensed Exterminator or Health Inspector can confirm you have an infestation.** To find a Licensed Exterminator, visit the web site [www.nepma.org](http://www.nepma.org).

If you have questions or need help, call the Lowell Health Department at 978-970-4010 Ext. 91056.